

A NEW
SUCCINCT AND CANDID
EXAMINATION
OF
Mr. DAVID LEVI's
OBJECTIONS,
IN HIS
LETTERS TO DR. PRIESTLEY.

[Price 1s. 6d.]

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MR. DAVID LEVY

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LETTERS TO DAVID LEVY

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(A N E W
SUCCINCT AND CANDID
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O F
Mr. DAVID LEVI'S
O B J E C T I O N S
A G A I N S T
J E S U S C H R I S T,
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G O S P E L H I S T O R Y;
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L E T T E R S T O D R. P R I E S T L E Y,)
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P H I L I P D A V I D K R A U T E R, D. D.

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MDCCLXXXVIII.

(A NEW)
SUCINCT AND CANDID
EXAMINATION

OF

MR. DAVID LEVI'S

OF FECTIOUS

AGAINST

JESUS CHRIST,

AND THE

GOSPEL HISTORY;

IN HIS

LETTERS TO DR. PRIESTLEY,

BY

PHILIP DAVID KRAMER, D.D.

LATHAM, PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL,
AND SOLD BY C. DILLY, FOLLY, LONDON.

JAMES MARSHALL, MILSON STREET, BATH.

REGISTERED



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P R E F A C E.

IT is chiefly with a view of illustrating some difficult passages in the Gospels, at which not only Jews, but some amongst the Christians also, have taken offence, that I have undertaken to write this Examination of Mr. LEVI's *Objections*, intending it for an *Appendix* to my *Essay on Isaiah vii. 14, 15, 16*; but that the publication of the Essay would have been thereby delayed beyond the proposed time.

Though these *Objections* are not new, but have been frequently made and answered before, yet I am in hopes that a new consideration of them will not seem superfluous, or be disagreeable to the public, as the subject is such as deserves constant and most scrupulous attention, and as the view of it is
brought

brought here, by the light of a true and just interpretation, into a short compass, *abstracted from particular principles or hypotheses, adopted by the different Christian sects or writers.*

As I have not the least design to detract from, or dispute the merit of others, who have either formerly or lately written on the same subject; and, for this reason, have solely confined my observations to the matter itself, as represented by Mr. LEVI's own words; I hope this attempt will not be construed as if I had any thought of entering into, or fomenting any controversy, from which I freely profess myself rather averse, not only on account of my years, but inclinations also.

Controversies are generally resolved on to gain or maintain a proposed point, or to contradict; and also carried on, as it were, in a manner of hostilities: which, in my humble opinion, is neither the disposition of mind required,

required, nor the proper way tending, to be introduced to the sacred and recondite abodes of truth, where harmony reigns.

On the other hand, I cannot deny my ardent wish to be, that a serious, impartial, and calm *inquiry* into the *true grounds and nature of the Christian Religion* (which, I am confident, can well bear it) may more and more prevail;—an inquiry, which, unconcerned about the event, is directed placidly and patiently to seek after true and full evidence, wherever it may be had from, leading to truth; but not to determine or decide, till such appear; and upon its *certain* appearance to communicate it to others desirous of truth, without force, vehemence, or artifice. Had there been less of controversy, and more of such inquiry in the Christian Church, she would, I dare say, appear in greater lustre, and to more advantage, than we see her at present.

Happy

x P R E F A C E.

Happy is it, however, that our days seem to favour such an inquiry more than former ones did; to improve which to the utmost of his abilities and opportunities, I cannot help to think to be the duty of every sincere Christian.

Animated by these sentiments and motives, I do not hesitate to present this Examination to the public. May it prove serviceable to confirm sincere, but perhaps weak Christians in the *faith of* THE SON OF GOD, *whereby they are to live*: Gal. ii. 20, and to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of others towards it!



Mr.



Mr. DAVID LEVI's

OBJECTION I. p. 20, 22, 23.

“ **W**HETHER Christ was the second
“ person in the Trinity, as Chris-
“ tians in general hold, or only a prophet,
“ —I say, in either case he could not be
“ sent to us in the *first* place: nor could we
“ receive him, without being hostile to the
“ laws of Moses, as also to GOD, who was the
“ author of them.

“ For, if he came in the former character,
“ it would be an unanswerable argument,
“ that his doctrine never came from GOD, it
“ being impossible, that GOD should contra-
“ dict himself: for hath he not expressly told
“ us himself in the second commandment,

B

“ THOU

“ THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BE-
 “ FORE ME?—and Moses—*Hear, O Israel,*
 “ *Jehovah our God is ONE Jehovah.* Deut.
 “ vi. 4.

“ And, if in the second character, that is,
 “ as a prophet, we likewise could not receive
 “ him: for, in the first place, he was defi-
 “ cient in the essential character of a pro-
 “ phet. We do not find it recorded that
 “ Christ prophesied in the name of God, as
 “ it is expressed by all the other prophets
 “ from Moses to Malachi (who was the last)
 “ As the Lord spake unto Moses, &c.—But
 “ as to Jesus, we only find, *that he went about*
 “ *all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and*
 “ *preaching the gospel, and healing all manner of*
 “ *sickness, and all manner of diseases.*——Free-
 “ thinkers may perhaps say, it was some-
 “ thing like a spiritual mountebank: but I
 “ have only to observe, it was not like a pro-
 “ phet, endued with the spirit of prophecy.

“ Nay more, he even preached himself, as
 “ *the light of the world.* John viii. 12.”

EXAMINATION.

The character in which Jesus was sent to
 the Jews, and was to be received by them,
 was

was that of THE SON OF GOD. This is the expression constantly used in the New Testament to describe and propose him as the object of our faith. John xx. 31. Now, if the argument from the second commandment, and from the words of Moses, shall be of any force against him, it must first of all be proved, that THE SON OF GOD IS ANOTHER, *i. e.* an ALIEN GOD from the GOD whose Son he is: (admitting that the term, Son of God, in its proper sense implies the nature of God, as much as the term Son of Man, implies that of man) and that, BEFORE HIM, which may be explained either, *in his sight*, or *against him*, in opposition to him: as also, that to be one Jehovah, and to be a Father, is absolutely inconsistent and contradictory. Now, as it will be found, I trust, impossible to prove the latter, so is the former, as long as GOD cannot contradict himself. For, it is GOD himself, who *did* foretell by David of one, to whom he says: "Thou art MY SON, this day I have BEGOTTEN thee;" Psal. ii. 7. and whom "to kiss he commands the kings on earth," Psal. ii. 12. And how nugatory would be the questions in Proverbs xxx. 4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or de-

B 2

"scended?

“scended? who hath gathered the wind in
 “his fist? who hath bound the waters in a
 “garment? who hath established all the ends
 “of the earth? what is his name, and what
 “is HIS SON’S name, if thou canst tell?—if
 such a being as a Son of GOD were not even
 possible? The Jews at Jesus’ time no where
 grounded their accusation on this head upon
 the impossibility of the thing itself, but that
being a man, he said, I am the Son of GOD.
 John x. 33, 36.

The Son of GOD’S existence being possible,
 and in no ways contradictory to the second
 commandment, or Moses’s words, Jesus be-
 ing called the Son of GOD, can be no argu-
 ment at all, that his doctrine never came
 from GOD, and he could not be sent to the
 Jews, or be received by them, without being
 hostile to the laws of Moses, as also to
 GOD; but it depends upon the manner, how
 any one possibly can be proved to be the Son
 of GOD, and whether Jesus has been so
 proved? Can it be made good that he has;
 the Jews as well as all to whom he is
 preached, are bound to receive him as sent
 from GOD, or they will be truly hostile to
 GOD.

Quite

Quite another and a new question is that *Whether Christ is the second person in the Trinity?* a question arisen long after the establishment of Christianity, on occasion of the attempts made by some to explain the *manner* in which the different relations of Father, Son, and Spirit, may be conceived to unite in God, who is so *universally* acknowledged by all Christians to be but *One*; that no sect of them would suffer any one professing *more* than *one* God amongst them. This, as it has been no where in the Scriptures plainly and directly expressed, being probably beyond the reach of the present limits of our rational faculties; recourse has been had to philosophical speculations and language, not without increasing difficulties and perplexities. Yet, whatever these may be, in reality or imagination, nobody ought to be thereby deterred from believing in God, the Father, His Son, and His Holy Spirit, nor will any body thereby be excused for not believing, considering, that it is neither necessary to saving faith, nor required of us, to know *the manner* in which these relations unite in God, the existence of them being by their *actual manifestation* as incontestibly confirmed, as

the existence of the being of God itself is. John xiv. 1. 1 John ii. 13. This, as it was sufficient and satisfactory at and for a long while after the first planting of Christianity, it can and ought to be now so to us.

Supposing Christ is acknowledged to be the Son of God, it is self-evident that he must be infinitely superior to any prophet, and consequently his way of speaking and acting must be very different from that of prophets. Could these only say, The Lord spoke to me,—it was *his* prerogative to declare, *I say*, because the Lord was in him; and he one with the Father, in whose name he came. Was it the province of other prophets not to preach themselves, but foretell of Him: so he MUST preach HIMSELF, because he came to manifest himself to be whom they foretold. Did he go about preaching and healing, it was, because he was to shew himself to be the *Saviour of the world*, which no other could be; and even this was foretold of him. Thus said Isaiah, chap. xxxv. 5, 6, “Then the eyes of the
“ blind shall be opened, and the ears of the
“ deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the
“ lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue
“ of

“ of the dumb sing.” And in chap. lxi. the same prophet introduceth him saying, “ The
 “ spirit of the Lord is upon me, the Lord
 “ hath anointed me to preach good tidings
 “ unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up
 “ the broken-hearted:” And hath not God, after he had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, pledged himself as their Lord, to be their *physician*, saying, as it is in our translation, “ I am the Lord that healeth
 “ thee.” Exod. xv. 26. Who now but a *freethinker*, or, as such might more properly be called, a *loofethinker*, could dream of a spiritual mountebank?

Further; though Christ’s proper character is not that of a prophet, yet it can and must be expected of Him as the Son of God, who knows all things, that he also saw into futurity, and by his predictions shewed Himself to be the Son of God. What he foretold, he predicted not as one who had it *only* from hearsay, though what he had heard OF HIS FATHER he made known to his friends, John xv. 15. but as one before whose eyes the future things were like the present, and in whose hand and disposal they were. Thus, when he was come near, *he beheld the city, and*
wept

wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, &c. Luke xix. 41—44. Be it (as Mr. LEVI objects, p. 86) that Daniel's prophecy, chap. ix. 26, 27, had the same object, how different is the manner in which it is delivered to Daniel by the Angel, and in which Christ pronounced it? But where is in Daniel that detail of circumstances, that distinct view of revolutions preceding and following the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ gave to his disciples, Matth. xxiv.? And must not the same be said in regard to John v. 28. compared with Daniel xii. 3? the former of which Mr. LEVI, p. 87, calls an imitation, only in a little rougher language. No, not in rougher, but in that *authoritative language*, which becomes HIM alone who is to perform himself, what is predicted, who is not even mentioned in Daniel. Nor did Jesus in the said place, as Mr. LEVI pretends, [p. 88] *speak of the same thing AS NEAR AT hand, although a period of upwards of seventeen hundred years have elapsed since that time, which the prophet speaks of a future time; but quite another thing is in the 25th verse spoken of, as the bare reading will convince any body. I will only add one prophecy of Christ, where*
a suspicion

a suspicion of an imitation is even impossible, and which the event still from time to time verifies : I mean, what He said in vindication of the woman who anointed him in Bethany, not long before his death, Matth. xxvi. 13.—
 “ Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this
 “ gospel shall be preached in the whole world,
 “ there shall also this, which this woman has
 “ done, be said for a memorial of her.” The more immaterial the object of this prophecy seems to be, the more it must attract the admiration of every impartial and considerate person.

OBJECTION II. p. 25, 26.

“ If we compare Jesus with the rest of the
 “ prophets who succeeded Moses, from Joshua
 “ to Malachi, we shall find such a manifest
 “ contradiction between him and them, as
 “ fully demonstrates, that both parties could
 “ not be the messengers of God, as God never
 “ contradicts himself.

“ Jesus acted in direct contradiction to the
 “ law of Moses. For, whereas the law of
 “ Moses expressly commands the adulterer
 “ and

“ and adulterers to be put to death, Levit.
 “ xx. 30. Now, Jesus in defiance of this
 “ express command rescues the adulterers
 “ from the just punishment due to her crime,
 “ John viii. 3, 4, 5; and that by one of the
 “ most extraordinary devices that ever en-
 “ tered into the mind of man:—for if none
 “ were to be admitted as evidence in a court
 “ of justice against criminals, but the imma-
 “ culate, villainy would soon stalk trium-
 “ phant, and carry all before her with
 “ impunity.”

EXAMINATION.

Jesus is charged with having rescued the
 adulterers from the just punishment due to
 her crime. This ought first to be proved.
 From the account in the Gospel it is neither
 demonstrable, that the woman brought to
 Jesus was an adulteress, as she was accused to
 be; nor, if she was, that Jesus rescued her
 from the punishment due to her, in defiance
 of the express command of Moses. The
 Scribes and Pharisees said only to Jesus, that
 the woman was apprehended in the com-
 mission of adultery, but they alledged no
 proof, nor did they produce the witnesses;
 on

on the contrary, the whole was by them intended only as a trap, to inveigle Jesus: ver. 6. What can such be depended upon? If the woman was apprehended in the commission of the fact, why was not the man also brought to justice? They had either inquired into the case, and found it so, or not. If they had, why bring her to Jesus, who, they knew, was not appointed a Judge in such cases, when they were themselves clear in point of law? ver. 5. Does not this make the whole case, as stated by them, justly suspected? or rather, who can doubt, that there was a perversity in the stating, when he hears it related, that upon Christ's calling forth the woman's accusers, (ver. 10.) they all stole away (ver. 9.) without one remaining? What plainer indication can there be of a plot, if this is not? From this very circumstance it is also evident, that it was not so much Jesus, who rescued the woman, as the consciences of those who brought her to him, and by their importunity hoped, but in vain, to ensnare him. As her accusers had not condemned her, how could it be expected that he should? Is it a want of candour or attention, when Jesus is charged with rescuing her,

her, in defiance of the express command of Moses; at the same time he urgeth the accusers (ver. 6) to the execution of the law of Moses. For it was the witnesses place, by the custom of the Jews, in stoning criminals, to throw the first stone at them. Let this be remembered, and the answer of Jesus be carefully considered, and then let it be judged, whether he rescued that woman by the most extraordinary device?

His answer was, "*He that is without sin*" among you, let him first cast the stone at "*her.*" Does this imply that *none were to be admitted as evidence in a court of justice against criminals, but the immaculate?* The word *Ἀναμαρτητος*, *he that is without sin*, may be taken either in an *absolute* sense, for one that is without any fault at all, nor liable to any; or *restrictively*, for one who is not guilty of a particular sin, as of lying or falsehood, or of illicit venereal pleasures. In the Greek translation called the LXX, it is used for one that is innocent of idolatry, Deut. xxix. 19, and 2 Mac. xii. 42. But, though it is in the New Testament found only in this one place of St. John's Gospel, yet as the word *ἁμαρτία*, when opposed to *ἀληθεία*, or *truth*,

truth, by the same writer, in the same 8th chapter, ver. 46, undoubtedly means a lye or falsehood; and the verb *αμαρτανειν* in the 11th verse, illicit venereal practices; we may justly conclude that the word *αναμαρτητος*, derived from them, may admit the like restrictive significations, if the context plainly points them out. Now, as Christ saying, “*He that is without sin*, speaks undoubtedly to such as, according to the custom of the Jews, were to cast the first stone, should the woman have been put to that death, consequently to such as could or should be witnesses, of whom principally *veracity* is required: what ground have we to suppose, that he means one that is absolutely without fault; and not rather one *that is not guilty of lying or falsehood?*” And what could he have said more pertinent and striking in the present case, if the manner of their stating it, as I have shewn to be probable, was false. Would any body wish that one given to lies or telling falsehoods should be admitted as evidence in a court of justice? But supposing the woman was guilty, as from Christ’s admonition (ver.

* Suppose it were translated *He that is not wrong, or in the wrong.*

11) one may justly suspect her chastity, yet she could not with justice be condemned without a previous strict examination of the witnesses, unless those who brought the accusation against her could be supposed absolutely incapable of error, or falsehood, or malice. Now the request of the Scribes and Pharisees being that Jesus should upon their bare word condemn the woman, might he not justly make them sensible of their unreasonableness, by reminding them of the only condition upon which it could be granted, but no man can claim, viz. infallibility and perfect goodness. It is even not impossible, that her accusers might have shared in her guilt, by seducing, if not her, yet others, and encouraging lewd practices, but for some provocation, or out of spite, have turned informers against her? Who doth not know the history of Susannah? Then Christ would have laid it still closer to their conscience, and shewn how they were equally guilty with her, and consequently liable to the same punishment: He would also have shewn thereby that he did know them all, and his all-penetrating eye could see them in their most secret recesses, as being the light of the world,

world, (ver. 12). In whatever sense the word *αναμαρτητος*, *he that is without sin*, be taken, either for one that is not given to lies and falsehoods, or one that is not guilty of criminal lusts, or one who is not subject to any error, or tainted with any malice, Christ could say, *let such a one cast the first stone at her*, without giving room for any inference but this: that no accuser was fit to undertake the execution of a penal law, unless he was either himself infallible, and free of all malice, or his veracity should first stand the test, nor he himself be involved in the same guilt.*

What is extraordinary in this answer of Jesus, is the wisdom and power by which he hath defeated the malicious schemes of his enemies; effectually turning the accusation they intended against him, upon themselves, and forcing them, by the stings of their own consciences, either to desist from their prosecution, or become first their own executioners. Hence that shame and confusion, which made them glad only to be able to

* Though accomplices are sometimes admitted as evidences, yet does this not exempt them from punishment, unless by special pardon, of which there is nothing in the law of Moses. And without such exemption accomplices would not easily turn evidences, much less accusers.

hide themselves. This answer of Jesus may not improperly be compared with the method Solomon took in deciding the quarrel between the two whores, by commanding what he did not intend, that it should be done, in order to force them to discover the truth, and for which his wisdom became admired, and he feared all over the country. 1 Kings iii. 2—28. But here is more than Solomon: Here is one that searches the hearts and reins of men.

THE *second* contradiction between Jesus and the law of Moses, alledged by Mr. LEVI, (p. 27) is not better evinced than the preceding.

“ The law of Moses, says he, commands,
 “ that when a man hath taken a wife, and
 “ married her, and it come to pass that she
 “ find no favour in his eye, *because he hath*
 “ *found some uncleanness in her*, then let him
 “ write a bill of divorcement, and give it in
 “ her hand, and send her out of his house.
 “ Deut. xxiv. 1. This woman, so divorced
 “ by the law of Moses, was allowed to
 “ marry again, as well as the man; (ver. 3)
 “ whereas Jesus says, that, Whosoever shall
 “ put

“ put away his wife, and marry another,
 “ committeth adultery against her. Mark x.
 “ 11. The same of the woman, (ver. 12.)”

EXAMINATION.

THERE is not a syllable in the law of Moses, alledged by Mr. LEVI, implying a command; but it is merely giving directions conditionally, if such or such a thing should be done or happen, what might be done or not done in consequence thereof. It cannot be argued from thence, that the first is approved by law, or done by virtue of a right, but may only be tolerated as a custom, and for that very reason put under some restrictions. This is the very observation made by Jesus upon this law of Moses, than which nothing can be more reasonable; as there is in Moses himself an account extant of a divine institution, to which what Moses in the law alledged supposes to be done, is repugnant, to which Christ at the same time also appeals, Mark x. 5—10. Therefore those rather contradict Moses, who, under pretence of the conditional ordinance of Moses, attempt to introduce an unbounded licentiousness of divorcing. Besides, the law of Moses puts the case,

C

if

if a man gives a bill of divorce to his wife, *because he hath found some uncleanness in her*; and this case is likewise excepted by Jesus, when he speaks against divorces, Matt. v. 32. xix. 9.

Again, the law of Moses does not say a word, that a man, who puts away his wife, *without having found some uncleanness in her*, may marry another; but only ordains, that a man who hath divorced his wife, may not take the same again to his bed, if she had taken another husband after divorce, and either lost, or had been divorced from him also. But Christ pronounces him only an adulterer, who, WITHOUT THE SAID CAUSE, sends away his wife, and MARRIES ANOTHER; consequently, does it merely for wantonness sake, to have another: Polygamy seeming at the time of Jesus to have grown out of custom amongst the Jews; by which alone it seems formerly to have taken place amongst them, and at first to have been introduced.

Lastly; There is not the least hint in Moses's law, that a woman might divorce herself from her husband, and marry another; nor do I remember any instance in the Jewish history of a woman's having divorced herself from her husband, though this was no uncommon

common thing amongst the Romans. Christ only pronounces her an adulteress, who shall put away her husband, and marry another for wantonness sake, as happened amongst the Romans, whom Herod's family, and perhaps others then began to copy. Where is in all this a contradiction between Jesus and the law of Moses?

The *third* instance of a contradiction between Jesus and the prophets, pretended by Mr. LEVI, is as follows:

“The prophet Jeremiah, at the express
“command of God, enforces the due obser-
“vance of the sabbath, and in particular,
“that they bear no burden on the sabbath
“day. [Jer. xvii. 21, 22.] But Jesus, in di-
“rect contradiction of this command *of his*
“*father*, by the mouth of his prophets, or-
“dered the man who had the infirmity thirty
“and eight years, (and whom he cured on
“the sabbath) *to take up his bed and walk.*
“John v. 8.”

EXAMINATION.

As Mr. LEVI mentions the curing on the sabbath only by way of parenthesis, which

his countrymen in Jesus' time resented as much as the taking up his bed, I should almost be inclined to hope, that he was himself sensible of the unreasonableness of this, as indeed every lover of humanity must be, and much more so, if he knows that Christ used to cure only by his *word*, or perhaps *touch*, both which in no language are denominated *works*: But then I should wonder, indeed, how he could take such offence at Christ's ordering the cured man *to take up his bed and walk*, because it was the sabbath day; this being done, because he was, instead of being till then affixed to it as it were, now released from it, and carrying his bed was no more a burden to him than wearing clothes and ornaments, or making use of or changing utensils for the exigencies of life, which surely was not forbidden on the sabbath day. If he could on the sabbath day be carried on the bed to the pool, without breach of the law; (or else, he must have been brought there before, and staid till sabbath day was over), how could carrying the bed away, after it was found useless, be deemed so?

Nothing can be plainer, but that *Jeremiah* only inveighs against carrying on a traffick
on

on the sabbath day, bringing goods to market, which was kept in the gates, from the country, or warehouses, and doing day-labourer's work, or other worldly business; like what was practised in Nehemiah's time, and by him reprobated and checked, Neh. xiii. 5—22. To apply what is said of such works, to works of necessity or benevolence, or to an occasional use of one's limbs in the change of the situation of the body, is offering violence to common sense, and exposing religion to mockery.

From all that has been hitherto said, about the pretended contradictions between Jesus and the law of Moses, and the prophets, it is manifest, that, instead of Jesus being justly chargeable with any such, the *Jews* themselves were guilty of them, as well as many perversions and abuses of the law of Moses, and of the prophets.

OBJECTION III. p. 27.

“ As the divine mission of Moses, by God's
 “ speaking to him face to face, is clearly
 “ proved, and as God had strictly enjoined us
 “ by Moses not to ADD OR DIMINISH from
 “ the

“ the law so given by him,—What must we
 “ think of one, who by his doctrine abro-
 “ gated it? Eph. ii. 15. Rom. vii. 6. Gal. iii.
 “ 24, 25. and Heb. x. 1, &c. In my humble
 “ opinion, I think it is clear, that he could
 “ not be sent by God, as God never contra-
 “ dicts himself.”

EXAMINATION.

Either God can never abrogate or cause to be abrogated a law once given by himself; or this is only the case with Moses's law.—To say the first, would be downright absurdity; and before the other can be admitted, a very strong and cogent reason, even a formal declaration of God himself, will be required, whereby he has given up this right, common to every legislator, in favour of the law of Moses. But none such appears. Moses's injunction to the people of Israel, not to ADD nor DIMINISH from the law given by him, surely cannot take away the power and right of God to do it; nor imply, that He will never do it. On the contrary, Moses himself gave to the people of Israel positive instructions in the name of God, that, should God send them a prophet *like himself*, they should

should hearken unto him, Deut. xviii. 15; adding this severe threatening of God, (ver. 19.) “Whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.” And Malachi, the last of their prophets, at the same time that he exhorted the people to *remember the law of Moses*, assures them of a new revelation from God by Elijah the prophet, chap. iv. 4, 5. Has not God, when he permitted the people of Israel to choose themselves a king from amongst them, also invested these with a *legislative* power, though in subordination to the law of Moses? Have they not exercised it, even in ecclesiastical affairs? witness the alterations made by David and Solomon in the temple service. And how can it be imagined that God would contradict himself, in abrogating or sending one to abrogate the law of Moses, when he sent a heathenish king to destroy the law written with his own hand on the table of testimony, or instrument of covenant entered upon with the people by Moses, which was deposited in the ark, under his throne, within the temple?

We may, on the contrary, with great reason and justice, say, that God would have contradicted

contradicted himself, had he imposed the law of Moses for ever, and on all nations. For, as Paul has observed, Gal. iii. 15—18, God had, many hundred years before the law of Moses, promised to *Abraham* by a solemn covenant, that “*in him* (mediately) *and in his* “*seed* (one of his progeny immediately) ALL “THE NATIONS *of the earth* should be BLESSED.” This promise could not be invalidated by the law given afterwards: For, though this bound those to whom it was given, it did not bind Him who gave it; but the promise did. Now this promise could not have been fulfilled, had the law of Moses kept its sway. For instead, that according to the promise *blessing* was to be had, the law of Moses brought *curse*. Instead, that according to the promise *all the nations of the earth* were to be blessed, the law of Moses made a *separation* between the *Jews*, and *all the nations of the earth*, occasioning an enmity between them. Either the law must therefore be set aside, or the promise remain unfulfilled.—The latter being inconsistent with the *divine attributes*, the former is unavoidable, and has accordingly been foretold by the prophets. What can be more express to this purpose, than

than these words of God by Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 31. “ Behold, the days come, saith the
 “ LORD, that I will make a *new covenant* with
 “ the house of Israel, and with the house of
 “ Judah: NOT ACCORDING TO THE COVE-
 “ NANT THAT I MADE WITH THEIR FA-
 “ THERS, in the day that I took them by the
 “ hand to bring them out of the land of
 “ Egypt; which my covenant they brake, al-
 “ though I was a husband to them, saith the
 “ LORD: But this shall be the covenant,
 “ that I will make with the house of Israel:
 “ After these days, saith the LORD, I will put
 “ my law in their inward parts, and write it
 “ in their hearts; and I will be their God,
 “ and they shall be my people.” And this
 is the less to be wondered at, as God himself
 has often declared in the Old Testament,
 that he did not set a value on the rites insti-
 tuted by the law of Moses, on account of
 themselves. Thus, in the xlth Psalm, it is
 laid down as a maxim: “ Sacrifice and offer-
 “ ing thou didst not desire; offering and sin-
 “ offering hast thou not required.” See also
 Psal. li. 16. How earnestly is the same in-
 culcated by ISAIAH, chap. i. 11—14, as also,
 MICAH, chap. vi. 6, 7, 8!

As

As then the abrogation of the law of Moses can be no just objection against the divine mission of Jesus, let us inquire further, whether any such can be reasonably made, from the manner in which it has been effected. Mr. LEVI says, that it has been done *by the doctrine of Jesus*. This wants an explanation. If it means that Christ had taught things contradictory to the law, or denied its *just* authority and power, or caused people to refuse obedience to it; then I deny that Jesus has thus abrogated the law of Moses, as partly has been shewn already, and may easily further be proved. For, he formally protested, “that he was not come to destroy the “law and the prophets,” Matth. v. 17. But not only this: he also made it his business to rescue it from the corruptions and superstitions introduced by the traditions of men: and what is still more, he himself strictly observed it during his life on earth, being *made under the law*, Gal. iv. 4. Nor did his enemies bring such an accusation against him; on the contrary, they impeached him before Pilate, though most falsely, of mutinous practices and seditious doctrines *against the Roman government*; and when they could not

not make this out to the satisfaction of Pilate, then they would criminate him by their law as a blasphemer, *because he made himself the Son of God*, not for any attempt to subvert their law. But if it be said, that by the doctrine of Jesus the law was abrogated, in that sense, that after *his manifestation as the Messiah*, by the Gospel, his followers have been freed from the curse enforcing the precepts of the law, and the bondage concomitant to it; (“there being
 “no salvation in any other, and none other
 “name under heaven being given among
 “men, whereby they must be saved,” Acts iv. 12. and the law of Moses having only been intended for the interim to shew the great need we have of him, to excite and sharpen the expectation, to secure the manifestation of him; and to prevent the abuse of or dependance upon temporal advantages or prerogatives;)—If, I say, this be meant by *the abrogation of the law* of Moses, it cannot be denied that this is the effect of the doctrine of Jesus; but instead, that it should militate against his divine mission, it is a most signal proof of it, nor could he be truly the Messiah, the *seed of Abraham*, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, *the mediator of*
the

the New Covenant, were this not the effect of his doctrine, *i. e.* the Gospel.

In order to set this in the clearest light, let it be observed, that as far as the law of Moses enjoins duties essential to human nature and society, as these have existed and been obligatory long before the law of Moses existed, so they will continue the same, should that law exist no more; all that accrued to them by the law of Moses as such, consisting in the *penal sanction* or *curse* therein *expressly* annexed. As for the other parts of the said law, they were grounded on the miraculous deliverance of the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, to be God's people, and to have the land of Canaan for their possession, the title to which was thereby to be secured, and the use of it to be regulated. And this was grounded on the *covenant* God had made with Abraham, promising that in him and *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. Accordingly, these laws of Moses could only bind the people of Israel, as they were a separate state, possessed or intitled to the possession of the land of Canaan *for that seed* in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; whom to represent to them,

them, and to whom to pre-engage their allegiance, they had also a peculiar form of government, a *priestly kingdom* established amongst them. These institutions were therefore only *local* and *temporal*, sanctioned by temporal benefits or penalties, determinable at the time the *seed* of Abraham should come himself.

His coming could not bring blessing to all nations, as long as the curse of the law was in force; consequently this was *first* to be done away by him: And this the Gospel teaches us to have been done by *Jesus*, by means of a perfect obedience to his Father, the curse of the law taking only effect in default thereof: Rom. v. 19. Phil. ii. 7, 8. Gal. iii. 10. But he did more. The Jews, instead of joining, opposing him in this performance so furiously as to bring him to a most opprobrious death on the cursed tree, were the cause, that he became by appearance a curse in the sight of the law, but in reality a *martyr* to and for the law. Thus the first-mentioned part of the law of Moses was answered to all intents and purposes, even its curse had its effect, though ceasing by the resurrection of Christ. Had it been
abrogated

abrogated without a perfect obedience, then there would have been some specious pretence, as if there were a contradiction in God's dealings by the law and the Gospel. But considering this perfect obedience, we may justly say with Paul, Rom. iii. 31. "Do we then make void the law through faith? (and say) God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." On the other hand, we may add, from chap. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful men, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

As for the other part of the law, grounded on the possession of the land of Canaan, there was no occasion for abrogating the same, in respect to the Gentile nations of the earth, they having never been entitled to the
said

said land, consequently not subject to the law relating to it. Only, when the Gospel was preached to them, and some converted Jews from prejudice would obtrude on them the observation of their law, as well as promise to themselves more from it than was consistent with the truth and intention of it; the Apostles, particularly *the Apostle of the Gentiles*, were obliged to shew the absurdity of these notions, and openly to declare the nations free from the bondage of this law; leaving at the same time the Jewish converts, particularly those in Palestine, at liberty to observe the precepts of this law, as national institutes and customs, but not as terms or conditions (for which they also never were intended) of our acceptance with God for salvation and communion with him, which was only and entirely to be obtained through Jesus.

The Jews, being only as a separate state and nation possessed of the land of Canaan, subjected to the observance of this part of the law of Moses; had they *as a nation* accepted the grace and blessing offered by God to them through his Son, sent first to them as the heirs of the promise given to Abraham,

would

would have undoubtedly had a new and further divine instruction about these laws, or other regulations, which it would please God to prescribe to them, for making proper use of the possession of the land of Canaan, under their Messiah, as their King and liege Lord. But they, to their own infinite hurt, prevented it. For, infatuated by prejudices and mere worldly views, instead of receiving him with due submission, and preparing the way to him by true repentance and reformation, they conceived such a hatred against him, as prompted them, by *a national act and deed*, most horridly and ignominiously to murder him on the cross, and thus to extirminate him, as much as in them lay, out of his own land: whereby they became guilty of the *biggest treason* ever possible to be committed, and consequently lost also their title to the possession of the land of Canaan. God, however, in his infinite mercy, and in compassion to the ignorant multitude concerned therein, did not proceed to immediate judgment; but after fixing his Son by resurrection from the dead in power and heavenly glory, Rom. i. 4; and instead of his visible presence on earth, blessing it with the gift of
his

his Holy Spirit, common to all believers, had offers of pardon also made to them, upon condition of repentance and sincere allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. But they not only refusing these also, but more violently opposing and persecuting his followers, in the most furious and inhuman manner, throughout all parts of the then known world, and thus adding to their treason the sin against the Holy Spirit; divine justice proceeded at last to the execution of judgment against them, and after destroying their state, city, and temple, drove them with as mighty an arm out of the land of promise, which they had so justly forfeited, as their fathers were formerly brought into it; whereby they were not only incapacitated from making use of their law, or claiming any benefit by it, but instead of it abandoned also to its curse, and dispersed all over the world, doomed to infamy and misery. And thus the law of Moses was more effectually abrogated, than by any verbal declaration for this purpose ever could have been done. The reason of a law ceasing, the law ceases of itself. Their possession of the land of Canaan not only, but the title also to it,

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having

having ceased, the law depending upon it must cease of course. Can any Jew now, with the least shadow of reason, make complaints against Jesus for having abrogated the law of Moses? Had they submitted, and left the care of the law of Moses to him, what a benefit, what a blessing, might they have reaped by it? How much reason would they see to thank him for what he has done concerning it?

It is not without real grief and the utmost compassion for the deplorable situation of the once so distinguished Jewish nation, that I have written this; far from any design of aggravating their guilt, or upbraiding them with their sufferings. But as this is the true state of their case, how can I help to wish, that in compassion to themselves and their unfortunate progeny, they might take it into their serious consideration; and by being convinced of the true cause of their unhappy situation, be moved to use the proper means of removing it, instead of seeking for other causes, false or insufficient in themselves, and even injurious to God. Such is the pretence of being punished now for the *idolatry* of their *fathers*. How repugnant is this to the ex-
press

press declarations of God by their prophets, that the son shall not suffer for the sins of his father, if he does not follow his steps, as being inconsistent with his justice? How repugnant also to their own history, which informs us, how God, even from the early times of their being settled in the land of Canaan, whenever they turned from him to serve strange Gods, regularly from time to time punished them, by giving them up to their enemies to hold them in captivity, longer or shorter, till at last he turned them quite out of their land, and sent them into almost perpetual captivity (part of them only returning after seventy years from Babylon) for this crime, which is expressly and at large recorded to have been the cause of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities: 2 Kings xvii. 7. xxi. 10. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 24, 25. xxxvi. 12, 14—17.

The cause of their present forlorn state must be a national sin,—a sin, in which they still continue to partake,—a sin against the state, its constitution, and the very existence of it,—a sin peculiar to their nation, and not common with others.

Now if Jesus be truly the Messiah, the behaviour of the Jews towards him, from the time of his sufferings to this day, is exactly a sin tallying with this description; on the other hand, there is none of *that kind* they can be charged with from the time of the Babylonian captivity; on the contrary, they have from that time constantly proved their abhorrence against idolatry, and their uncommon zeal for their national laws, so far as to undergo the greatest torments and persecutions rather than infringe them. Is there not then the strongest presumption, that the source of their misfortune lays where it was shewn to Saul their kinsman, and afterwards the Apostle of the nations, by a voice from heaven; “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Acts x. 5. Should they not then, with all solicitude and caution, strive to get at the knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus? Should they not carefully lay aside all prejudices, nor suffer their minds to be biaſſed by a false zeal, even a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge? For what is that wrangling about the law of Moses? Do not all Christians profess it, as Jesus has taught

taught them, to be divine, though neither universally nor for ever binding? Do not the Jews themselves, at least the wiser amongst them, allow that it doth not bind any other nation besides them? Is it not now above seventeen hundred years, that by God's especial and signal dealings with them, it is even put out of their power to observe the main part of their national law? Have not the peculiar pledges and the glories of it been taken away from them ever since the Babylonian captivity? Have not their fathers, when they had them, and all opportunities and assistance for the observation of their law, thought it a hardship, to which they could not be brought to submit but by constant severities? And if they were now freed from it by God, through Jesus, should that be a reason of complaint against him? From us Christians, it would, in my opinion, be as bad a compliment to them, to assure them of their having the same yoke put upon their necks, if restored to the possession of Canaan, which their fathers could not bear, should they submit to Christ, whilst we enjoyed perfect liberty; as it would be from them to us, if they would pretend to make our submission

to it a condition of their having fellowship with us.

I make no doubt, considering many remarkable promises and express prophecies in the Scriptures,—the almost miraculous preservation of the Jews as a separate nation; and that their land, though now above 1700 years under the bane, has never by God been given to any other nation for an inheritance; but that they are still objects of divine mercy, and reserved by Providence for particular purposes. May their infidelity not obstruct them longer!

OBJECTION IV. p. 77.

“ As to the miracles of Jesus: I have ob-
 “ served, they were scarcely *just* or *rational*.
 “ I shall at present take notice of but one or
 “ two; (viz.) His driving of the devils out
 “ of two men possessed, and sending them
 “ into the herd of swine: Matth. viii. 28.
 “ This, I think, was not strictly just; for,
 “ as according to your [Dr. PRIESTLEY’S]
 “ opinion, he was but a man and a prophet,
 “ would

“ I would willingly be informed, what right
 “ he had to destroy another person’s pro-
 “ perty, in the manner he did, by sending
 “ the devils into them, and so causing them
 “ to run violently into the sea, and perish ?”

EXAMINATION.

Though Mr. LEVI seems to insinuate, as if the miracles of Jesus *in general* were liable to this objection; yet we may venture to say, that neither he nor any body else will be capable of mustering up, out of the infinite number of them, any, besides these two, where it could take place with any shadow of reason; and these two have been so often canvassed, that one should think sufficient what hath been said on both sides. And what if we should *now* not be able, for want of insight into all their circumstances on account of the brevity of the Gospel records, to shew the peculiar reasons why such or such a miracle has been performed in such or such a manner, would this be a proof that they are false? But even in these two instances, we need not be afraid of being left in the dark about the justice and reasonableness of them.

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It is questioned, “ *Whether Jesus, supposing him to be but a man and a prophet, had a right to destroy another man’s property in the manner he did, by sending the devils into them?* ”

But should it not be first asked, Whether Jesus could have done it *in the manner he did it, supposing him to be but a man and a prophet?* If he could not, as it might easily be shewn, the supposition itself is absurd, and the whole question nugatory. I beg only leave to observe, that according to the tenor of the history, the devils themselves looked upon Jesus in quite another light; and that this was the very reason why they first craved for permission from Jesus to do what otherwise they might have done without him, and why Jesus gave it, that consequently the case itself is altered by the supposition.

I will not, however, take advantage of this observation. Be Jesus considered as but a man and a prophet; in order to shew what right he had to do what he did, it must first be inquired, whether he did what he is said to have done, and doubted that he had no right to do? Has HE actually SENT the devils into the herd of swine, and so caused them

them to run violently into the sea and perish? The account says only, that he *permitted* the devils to enter into the herd of swine, and that upon the devils' *entreaties*. Is permitting one to go somewhere, the same with *sending*? And does he who permits one to go, therefore cause him to do whatever he does after being gone? Only if it be a *necessary* consequence of his going, and foreseen or known to him who permits, and if he himself be at full and absolute liberty to permit, or not to permit: for else the blame of all the evil in the world might be laid upon Almighty God himself.

But how can it be proved that the devils must *necessarily* drive the swine into the sea, as soon as they did enter them; or the swine must *necessarily* of themselves run THERE as soon as they became possessed? (for either of the two must have been the case). Why could not the devils abide with them on land, as well as they did with those men whom they possessed? especially as the reason of their desiring permission to enter the swine was, that they might not be sent away out of that country: Mark v. 10. Does not this event rather appear to have been contrary

trary to their wishes and fears, as they besought him that he would not command them *to go out into the deep*: Luke viii. 31. Had they believed therefore that the swine would *necessarily* of themselves run into the sea, as soon as they should possess them, they would certainly have rather avoided than desired it. Most probably this was the effect of a violent sudden fright, which the animals were struck with at the moment of their being possessed, under accidental circumstances. Christ indeed, *as a Prophet*, might have known that this would be the event, though it was not a necessary consequence of his permission; but then it must have been revealed to him, and by the same revelation he would have been directed, whether he should give permission or not; and thus he would only have been an instrumental cause, and God the principal, which is against the supposition. Nor can he be supposed then to have been at absolute liberty, either to permit or not to permit, the devils themselves alledging that he could *not have come hither to torment them before the time*: Matth. viii. 29: and the use of his power being *then* limited to the purposes of his commission,

commiffion. Now if it cannot be juftly and properly faid, that Jefus has fent the devils into the fwine, and fo caufed them to run violently into the fea and perifh, the objection is ill-grounded.

But to fet afide alfo this, let us inquire, whether this miracle, as performed by Jefus, is any ways liable to a charge of injuftice. The only perfons who might with any plausible reason think themfelves aggrieved by it, would have been the owners of the herds. Yet we do not find that they made any fuch complaint, or applied for any fatisfaction for the lofs they fufained by their herds being drowned. We only read, that after having the cafe ftated to them, how it happened, ftruck with reverential awe of Jefus, and a fense of their own unworthinefs, they befought him that he would depart out of their coaft: like Peter, who at the fight of the miraculous draught of fifh, fell upon his knees, and faid unto Jefus, “ Depart from me, for
 “ I am a finful man, O Lord,” Luke v. 8. Is it not then ftrange that others, and that even now-a-days, fhould officioufly undertake to vindicate their rights, and to fue for their lofses? and ftill more ftrange, that Jews
 fhould?

should? Can this be an effect of tender-heartedness and love of justice, or of a spirit of opposition? For, all which can be said for them amounts to this; What right had Jesus to cause the destruction of another man's property? What, If I should return the question, and ask, What right had this people to feed herds of swine in a country by the laws of which they were forbidden food, defiling the inhabitants, and where they must become a nuisance? If it be the right of every owner of land, to drive from it whatever is a nuisance, let become of it what will, why should not a prophet of the LORD have a right to drive away such a nuisance from the LAND OF THE LORD, over which and its laws he is set as a watchman? (How much more the Lord of the land himself, as the Messiah is undoubtedly of Canaan!) Further, Doth not justice require that the public good should be preferred to private interest; and the welfare of men, to that of beasts? And was not this the case here? "The possessed men (we are told) were so exceeding fierce, that no man might pass that way;" (Matth. viii. 28.) "whom no man could tame; (Mark v. 4.) and always night and day

“ day in the mountains, and in the tombs,
 “ crying, and cutting (each) himself with
 “ stones.” (ver. 5.) Now, would it have been
 just in Jesus, whom the devils had also the
 insolence to provoke, to let the public longer
 suffer, and the poor men be excruciated to
 the greatest danger of their life, when He
 and He *alone* could deliver them; and that
 only to preserve herds of swine? Would you
 say, Might he not have done both? This to
 shew, would be the province of those who
 find fault with his manner of doing it?
 Those who look upon the devil only as a fi-
 gure of speech, or *figurative denomination* of
 I do not know what, may perhaps think so:
 But without entering upon this subject; as
 long as the Gospel history is any reality, the
 devils, whatever they were, could shift their
 quarters. Now they were either to be per-
 mitted to range at large, and to seek for an-
 other abode at pleasure, or not. If they
 were, they might have remained in the coun-
 try, and fixed upon other men for their fu-
 ture residence, as they did before. What then
 would the country have been the better for
 their being driven out of these they now pos-
 sessed? Further, might not even the owners
 of

of these herds have seemed to them more eligible than their herds? Suppose they had entered into these, would they not rather have wished them in their herds, even with the loss of them? Was it not then a real and great benefit even to them, to be secured from such guests, though at the expence of their swine? Were they not *thus* amply compensated for it?

If the devils were not to be left at large, but to be confined and debarred from entering into men; what prerogative or privilege had these herds of swine before other animals in this or any other country, (especially, as in all probability they were the only ones near at hand) that the devils should not be permitted to enter into them, when to their own cost, they desired it? On the contrary, as with them, and perhaps them only, the effect was, that they ran into the sea and perished in the waters, their being possessed could not have any further ill consequence for other creatures; and they themselves were soon freed from torture; instead of which, the devils brought upon themselves a punishment, which they were afraid of, and wished to avoid, but whereby the whole continent

continent was once for all relieved entirely from the fear of so formidable a hellish *legion*. Now, I wish to know, how Jesus could have done in a better manner what he was about than he actually did? and whether devils or men could have stricter justice done to them than they had?

OBJECTION V. p. 78.

JESUS'S " cursing the fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season, Mark xi. 13. This I conceive neither rational nor just. For, in the first place, the text says, *And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not YET.* Hence it is manifest, that he required the tree to produce fruit out of season, and which would have been contrary to the intent of its creator: and therefore he, as a dutiful son, curses the innocent and guiltless tree, for doing that which his Father had commanded it to do; viz. To bear fruit in its proper season. If, after this, Christians should still persist in the miracle, according to the *letter* of the story, much good may
" it

“ it do them; but I am sure it will never be
 “ the means of converting the unbelieving
 “ Jews to the Christian faith.

EXAMINATION.

It is a pity Mr. LEVI has been here misled by the *translation*. For his whole argument rests upon the particle *yet*, which is not in the original; for the Greek word in this is *Ov*, not *Ovπω*, which particle signifies *not yet*. But could it even be admitted that both might be used in the same sense, yet it would lead to a conclusion directly opposite to that of Mr. LEVI. For if it was not *yet* time for the tree to have fruit, it was still more out of season that it should be full of leaves, those of the fig-tree not coming out before the fruit. It was therefore not for doing that which his Father had commanded it to do, that is, to bear fruit in its proper season, that Jesus cursed the fig-tree, but for doing that (though without any guilt) which his Father had not commanded it to do; viz. to make a shew of leaves when there was no fruit, and thus misleading and disappointing, if possible, the beholders. Mr. LEVI having thus misapplied his wit at an improper place, he will, I hope, now

now the more seriously inquire into the truth of the matter. This tree, according to *Matthew's* account, chap. xxi. 19. was the only *one*, [*μία*,] having such a shew of leaves at that time, and therefore some thing *extraordinary*. To look upon it in this light, we are the more obliged, being informed, from Mark xi. 13. (according to the translation in our Bible) that *the time of figs was not yet*, if only his words are rightly understood. For it cannot be meant that the season had that year not been favourable to figs, as this must have been known to every body, and other fig-trees would have been in the same condition with this; nor that the time of gathering the figs was not yet come; for this could not be the reason why there were none, or Jesus should step out of his way with an intention to gather some. Nor does this very reason given by Mark, permit us to suppose, that this tree was naturally barren; besides, that in this case, of course no body could have ever eat any fruit of it, and there would have been no occasion of making it *miraculously* wither, to put it out of any body's power to do it, but more for confirming the truth of the prediction, to let it stand as it was.

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There

There is no need for any of these suppositions. The words of MARK in the *Greek* text are, Οὐ γὰρ ἦν καιρὸς συκῶν. This last word may either be the *Genitive Plural*, from σύκος, a *fig*, or from συκη, a *fig-tree*; only in the first case it is pronounced σύκων, in the second συκῶν. But what reason have we to adopt the first, when συκη is the word in the beginning of the verse, to which also the pronoun αὐτὴν relates. Admitting the latter, the sense of these words will be, *It was not the time of fig-trees*; which, what it implies, we may learn from chap. xiii. 28. “When her branch
 “ ——— putteth forth leaves.”^b The Evangelist therefore, added this observation, as well to signify that the shew of leaves on that fig-tree was an uncommon phenomenon in nature, as that it would have been uncommon had there been any fruit thereon, though not impossible. Do we not now and then hear of fruit-trees blossoming, and having leaves at a quite unusual time, even fruit, and admit it as something extraordinary? Why should we scruple to do it here? As such it was the more natural, that this tree should attract the attention of those that passed by it, and make even Jesus step out of the way, if
 haply

haply he might find any thing thereon, being hungry. For in the state of humiliation, wherein he was then, he was obliged to feel the wants of the body as well as other men, and likewise to seek and content himself with the ordinary means of supplying them. But, as the Evangelist tells us, “when he came “to it *he found nothing but leaves.*” What was now most proper for Jesus to do? Had Mr. LEVI had to advise him, he would have proposed “to make the fig-tree immediately “to bud and flourish, and presently to bring “fruit out of season, like the rod of Aaron;” Numb. xvii. 8. [p. 79.] But this being like the plan proposed to Jesus by the tempter in the wilderness, when he was an hungered, saying, “Command that these stones be “made bread,” Matth. iv. 2, 3, it must upon the same principles be rejected that was by Jesus; his rule being, “Man shall “not live by bread alone, but by every word “that proceedeth out of the mouth of God:” *i. e.* It is not for men to prescribe God the means, by which he shall supply their necessities, but wait for his pleasure, in obedience to his commands, and submission to his dealings,

During his state of humiliation, it did not become Jesus, though invested with divine power, to make use of it for his own convenience or gratification, but merely for glorifying his Father, and performing the work he was sent to do. Accordingly, he could not do a miracle to supply his want of food; but if at the same time the glory of his Father, and the business he was sent for, required the exertion of such a power, then he could not omit directing it to those purposes. Thus, when the tempter had the impudence to propose that he should fall down and worship him; then he durst say, "*Get thee hence, Satan.*" And such an occasion offered itself also here. When Jesus went to the fig-tree to see if he might find any thing thereon, but found nothing besides leaves, he had his disciples with him, whom to convince of God's being his Father, who had sent him as his Son, was his proper work on earth, John xvii. 4, 6, 7, 8, which now was near the conclusion. A few days after, his disciples were to be brought to the severest trial of their faith, during his sufferings and death, which had they not stood it, his work would have been lost. But how easily might the
fight

sight or remembrance of this seeming disappointment of Jesus, (especially in an hour of temptation) occasion the same thoughts to rise in their minds that a Pharisee conceived at another opportunity, Luke v. 39; “ This man, *if he were a prophet*, (much more the Son of God) would have known what a tree this is,” and that it has no fruit. Now had Christ let it pass unnoticed, what a dangerous effect might that have had upon their faith! Was it not therefore necessary, that at the same time he, on account of his humiliation, suffered himself to be tempted by means of that tree, he should also shew, that notwithstanding this, he was still superior to every temptation. And how could he shew this better than by thus powerfully removing the cause of this temptation *for ever*; saying, “ No man eat fruit of thee hereafter, for ever.” This was certainly no hardship for the tree, innocent and guiltless as it was, nor unjust, as the whole land was properly *his* as the Messiah’s: Isaiah viii. 8.

But it could do the more good to men (and especially to such a one as *Judas*, who was then still with him) by being a lesson to them how dangerous a thing *hypocrisy* is, how abo-

minable in the sight of God; and the more so, the more extraordinary the appearance is, it has; how Christ is not to be tempted, nor his patience and long-suffering abused with impunity. Would to God the Jewish nation had then taken the hint, or would still take it! It is only their fault, if this miracle, like others, have no effect towards converting them. But Christ turned this miracle also unto a blessing to his disciples. For when they shewed that they were affected by what had happened to the fig-tree, and marvelled, saying, "How soon is the fig-tree
 "withered away!" He answered and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, If ye
 "have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not
 "only do this which is done with the fig-
 "tree; but also, if ye shall say unto this
 "mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou
 "cast into the sea, it shall be done; and all
 "things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer,
 "believing, ye shall receive." Matth. xxi. 20, 21, 22. This miracle was therefore a pledge to *his Apostles*, that whenever they should come into temptation, nothing should be able to overcome them, and hinder their work, provided they remained stedfast in faith; moreover,

moreover, that whatsoever they should by faith be assured to be necessary for them in the execution of his commands, they should upon their prayers receive. Can now any one, who considers attentively and impartially what has been offered, think a miracle like this unjust or scarcely rational?

There is another circumstance Mr. LEVI urges against this miracle. “For, (says he) “in *Matthew* xxi, it appears, that he first “cast out the buyers and sellers out of the “temple, and on the morrow cursed the “fig-tree; whereas, according to *Mark* xi, “it is clear that it was transacted before “the driving of them out of the temple, “which must greatly hurt the credibility of “the history.”

EXAMINATION.

A difference only in the order of facts related by two historians, cannot affect the credibility of the history itself, especially, if it does not appear that both designed to relate them in the precise order as to the time they have happened in.

Thus

Thus it seems that *Matthew* has recorded, in a summary manner, what Christ has DONE in the temple the first day he entered it and the following ones, without regard to the precise day, (ver. 12—16) as he also mentions (ver. 17) only once his going in the evening to Bethany, (though he did that for several evenings) and joins to it what passed in the way from and to it, without particularizing the day in which it happened, (ver. 12—19). The buyers and sellers may therefore have been driven out the second day, notwithstanding his mentioning it in the 12th verse, and then there is no contradiction between *Matthew* and *Mark*. *Luke* doth evidently relate the same facts, without any regard to the precise time, chap. xix. 45—48. But nothing does hinder us also to suppose, that Jesus may have both days driven out the buyers and sellers, others being come the second day, notwithstanding his driving out some the day before: and it may have been on both days the first business Jesus did coming into the temple; which was on the first day but late, but on the second early.

There is an equity of interpretation every author has a just claim to, but more particularly a respectable and concise one.

OBJECTION VI. p. 87.

“ The Evangelist St. Matthew, in the first
 “ chapter of his Gospel, gives us the gene-
 “ alogy of Christ; and Luke in the third
 “ chapter of his Gospel does the same; but
 “ with such difference, that an unprejudiced
 “ person would hardly think they belonged to
 “ one and the same person: for the latter
 “ not only differs from the former, in almost
 “ the whole genealogy from Joseph to David,
 “ but has also added a few more generations;
 “ and likewise made Jesus to descend from Na-
 “ than the son of David, instead of Solomon.
 “ And you will also please to observe, that
 “ they are not only contradictory to each
 “ other, but are inconsistent with themselves;
 “ for what can be more so than Matth. i. 18,
 “ with Matth. xiii. 55.; or than Luke i. 34,
 “ 35, with Luke xiv. 22 ?”

EXAMINATION.

As for the genealogies of St. Matthew and
 Luke, it is manifest from inspection, that
 they differ almost entirely from David to Jo-
 seph; but it must be a *precipitate reader* who
 therefore would think that they both could
 not

not belong to one and the same person; whereas every man must have two genealogies belonging to him, one from the father's and the other from the mother's side, which necessarily must more or less differ, if these have not been brother and sister. Now, that Matthew gives us the genealogy of Joseph, as the reputed father of Jesus, is evident from his own words. For, after he had throughout the whole of this genealogy used the expression—Such a one begat such a one, and accordingly said (ver. 16.) “*Jacob begat Joseph*, the husband of Mary,” here he does not go on—*Joseph begat Jesus*, but suddenly changes the expression, saying, “*Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom (Mary) was born;*” or (as it might for the better conformity have been rendered) was begotten Jesus, who is called Christ. On the other hand, that Luke gives us the genealogy of Jesus from his mother Mary's side, is likewise evident from his own words at the beginning of his genealogy, which are very remarkable, if rightly understood. After he had related (chap. iii. 22) that at the baptism of Jesus “a voice from heaven came, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee
“ I am

“ I am well pleased,” he immediately goes on, according to the Greek text, *Και αὐτος ην ὁ Ἰησους ὡσει ετων τριακοντα αρχομενος ων ως ενομιζετο υιος Ιωσηφ, του Ηλι——της Θεου*: The exact translation of which seems to be this: ‘ And this, or the very same (viz. the Son of ‘ God) was that Jesus who was about thirty ‘ years beginning,* being (when he was reputed the son of Joseph) that of Eli——of God.’ Luke would have contradicted himself, if, at the same time he avers that Jesus was only *reputed* to be the son of Joseph, he had said that he *was* the son of Joseph. But it was very necessary to observe, as he was about to assert him to be the Son of God, when he was reputed the son of Joseph, that he was properly no one man’s son, only by his mother’s side, the son of Eli† her father, consequently grandson,‡ and so on in a series to

* In the Old Testament a person is said to be thirty years if he did but begin his thirtieth. This observation is the key to the chronology of the Old Testament; whether we have here to understand it of the whole life-time of Jesus, or from his baptism, chronologers must inquire.

† *Wolffius* in his *Curæ* on Matth. i. 20, has observed that *Mary* is called the daughter of *ELI* in the *Gemarah*, or Commentary on the *Mishnah*, or text of the Jewish *Talmud*.

‡ The Hebrews have no particular names to distinguish the relation to distant progenitors, as grandson, great grandson, but simply say *son*, and thus Christ is called the son of all from Eli to Adam.

Adam,

Adam, but the Son of God originally. That the Greek Particle *ως* is sometimes used in the sense given here by me, may be seen by comparing Luke i. 23. ii. 15. John ii. 9. And that the conclusion of the genealogy *του Θεου*, does not refer to Adam, but to Jesus, is likewise palpable; because, otherwise every man's genealogy must terminate in the same manner, whereas this is not only quite unusual, but contrary to the design of *Luke*, who added this for distinction sake, and to make the end of his genealogy correspond with the position set down in the 22d verse.

What is pretended by those who deny the miraculous conception of Christ, *that he would not be the Son of David, if he had not been procreated by the common way of generation*, is a mere cavil. Is not in the eyes of all the world, a daughter's child as well a grand-child as the son's child? Could Christ be called the son of David in any other sense but as a descendant in a remote rectilineal degree, had he had a natural father lineally descended from David? To be a son of David, it is required only to be *of the seed of David*. John vii. 42. Rom. i. 3. 2 Tim. ii. 8. Are not the daughters as well the seed of
their

their father as the sons? And the daughter's sons as well as the son's sons? How much more one begotten supernaturally, without the concurrence of a man?

But if it should be further objected, that thus the genealogy of Joseph would be to no purpose, if he was not his son: I answer, that though he was not his natural son, he was his *adopted* son, and by this adoption he became entitled to the succession to the throne of David; to establish which among the Jews, (for whom Matthew chiefly wrote) the genealogy of Joseph was requisite. His descent from David by the mother's side did not give him that title, because women did not regularly succeed to the throne amongst the people of Israel; though, had he not been by her side a son of David, he could have had no title at all to the kingdom, consistently with the promise given to David, and therefore his genealogy from the mother's side was quite necessary. Hence, when the angel announced to Mary the conception and destination of Jesus, he said, "The LORD GOD shall give him the throne of his *father* David." He calls David his father, to shew what he said was in consequence of
 God's

God's promise to David: but when he says that GOD will GIVE him the throne; he plainly insinuates, that it is not by the usual way of succession, but by the particular appointment of GOD, that he should inherit David's throne. For though the succession to it belonged only to males, yet it was not confined to the eldest, or next; but as GOD appointed Solomon, who was the youngest of David's sons, to succeed him, so he might, at any time, give him what successor he pleased from his sons. And it is very remarkable that in the promise given to David, 2 Sam. vii. 12, 14, his seed to whom his throne should be established for ever, is thus described: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son;" which, though it was *literally* and *miraculously* fulfilled in Jesus, and in none else, at least shewed that the fulfilling of it was not to be directed by or expected in the course of natural propagation. Yet, as it is the way of divine wisdom to make use of the ordinary means as much as possible, in the pursuit of her designs, so it pleased GOD in this case of Jesus to make use of the ordinary way of adoption, and for this purpose to cause Joseph, a direct descendant

dant from David, by, and for ought we know the last of the line of Solomon, to become his father by adoption, and thus *superabundantly* to furnish him with an earthly title, to introduce him by to the Jewish nation.

That Matthew had this view in giving the genealogy of Joseph, may fairly be concluded from its inscription;* by which he plainly refers the reader to God's promises and covenants with Abraham and David, according to which the Christ or Messiah, and King of the Jews, as Jesus is stiled chap. ii. 2, was to be of the seed of David and Abraham; as also by his dividing his genealogy into three branches or periods, *1st*. Before the kings of Israel; *2^{dly}*. During the kings; *3^{dly}*. After the kings.

What Mr. LEVI finds fault for with *Luke*, that he made Jesus to descend from Nathan, the son of David, instead of Solomon, arises from a prejudice, which however is almost general, as if the Messiah were to be lineally descended from Solomon. This is no where said in the Scriptures, nor is Jesus or the

* Βιβλος γενεσεως Ιησου Χριστου υιου Δαβιδ υιου Αβραμ. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Might it not be rendered, *The roll of the parentage of Jesus, the CHRIST?*

Messiah,

Messiah ever called there the son of Solomon, but always the son of David only.† It was indeed said of him to David, 1 Chron. xxviii. 7, “ I will establish his kingdom for ever,” but this was conditionally, “ *if he be constant* “ *to my commandments and my judgments, as at* “ *this day.*” And David expressly foretold him, (ver. 9,) “ *If thou forsake him, (God) he will* “ CAST THEE OFF FOR EVER.” As the former has been actually the case, so was the latter: for from the time of Zedekiah’s being carried captive into Babylon, the family of Solomon was deprived of the Royal dignity, only the bare title to it remained as long as he had a posterity; God having never transferred the same to any other branch or family, till Jesus; and if the male line of Solomon is, as to me seems probable, become extinct, with Joseph, the father of Jesus by adoption, we have the most striking instance of the exactness of Providence in fulfilling her predictions. All this I hope more fully to shew in an *Essay* on 2 Sam. vii.

From what has been hitherto demonstrated, I hope it is plain, that there is no contradic-

† Compare what we have observed in the *ESSAY ON ISAIAH* vii. 14. Sect. ii. p. 50.

tion between the two genealogies of Christ, but that they both really and truly belong to one and the same person, Jesus, and are both just. What difficulties in some particulars remain in them, are either omissions or interpolations, to which genealogies are very liable, especially when they have gone through many, perhaps unskilful or careless, hands; and those also in the Old Testament are subject to like, if not greater objections. What gives an unquestionable presumption for the veracity of the Evangelists is, that they had published these genealogies before the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Jews were still possessed of their genealogies; whereas they are now so entirely lost, that, supposing Jesus were not the Messiah, it would be impossible for the Jews to prove any to be the son of David, without an extraordinary divine revelation of his pedigree.

Had the Jews had any just exceptions against the genealogies of the Gospels, when they were published, they would certainly have been careful to make them known, with their proofs, and handed them down amongst themselves to the latest posterity, considering their bitter hatred against the Christian religion:

gion : instead of which they have nothing to offer, but barefaced calumnies. Could they ever have proved him *not to be the Son of David*, this would have been sufficient to quash for ever all pretensions whatever of his being the Messiah. This being not only *never* done, but on the contrary, it being certain that he was publickly acknowledged, and commonly addressed *as such* by his contemporaries, without any contradiction from his adversaries, when they were most busy to find out any cause of prosecuting him as an impostor; and both genealogies of the Gospels fully agreeing in this point; this is entirely sufficient to justify our faith in him as the son of David; though now, at this distance of time, and by the want of proper vouchers, some doubts might arise about one or other *link* of the genealogical *chain*. I think it therefore as needless, as it would be too prolix for my present design, to enter into a special discussion of such particulars in these genealogies, though it might not be impossible to account for them in a probable manner.

But I cannot help to express my surprize at seeing the Evangelists charged with *inconsistency* with themselves, because Matthew relates

relates (chap. xiii. 15) the account the countrymen of Jesus gave of him, "Is he not
"the carpenter's son? Is not his mother
"called Mary?" and likewise Luke iv. (as I
suppose it should have been printed instead
xiv. 22.) "Is not this Joseph's son?"

Where have either Matthew or Luke denied this, *in a certain sense*? Hath not Matthew himself on this account traced Joseph's genealogy? Hath not Luke expressly observed, that he was *reputed* the son of Joseph? Has either of them any where asserted, that the particulars of his conception by the Holy Spirit were then publicly known and talked of? Does the ignorance of these his countrymen disprove his higher origin? Are there not instances in history, that kings have for a long time passed for the sons of those by whom they have been brought up?

OBJECTION VII. p. 88.

"I must now take notice of an expression
"recorded by John, chap. v. 37. 'And the
"Father himself, which has sent me, hath

“ borne witness of me. Ye have neither
 “ heard his voice at any time.’ Pray, Sir,
 “ what do you think of this expression; and
 “ which is so contrary to what both Jews
 “ and Christians believe? viz. That God
 “ spake to the Jewish nation face to face, as
 “ recorded by Moses. Now I think it is
 “ clear, that you must grant, either that
 “ Moses spake truth, and the expression of
 “ Christ was false; or that Christ spake
 “ truth, and Moses false; and that the whole
 “ nation were deluded in such a manner as
 “ not to believe their own eyes or ears.”

EXAMINATION.

In the speech whereof the alledged ex-
 pression is a part, Jesus reproaches the Jews
 with a stubborn obstinacy, by which all
 means of conviction became ineffectual with
 them. They pretended that they had only
 his bare word, instead of a proof of his being
 the Son of God. (ver. 31, compared with
 chap. viii. 13.) For this is meant by the
 expression *to bear witness of himself*. Jesus,
 allowing, that if this were the case, it would
 not be of validity, (though therefore what
 he affirms would not become false, but still
 be

be true : chap. viii. 14.) shews the contrary to be fact, by appealing to the witnesses which had declared for him, and were not only men, but the greatest and most irrefragable one, his heavenly Father; who, besides the works which He had given HIM to finish, [perform,] viz. the redemption and salvation of men, Luke xix. 10. *the very same bearing witness* that the Father had sent him, (ver. 36) had HIMSELF borne witness of him. (ver. 37.) This was done at Christ's baptism, when a voice from heaven was heard proclaiming, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" Matth. iii. 17. (which could be no other than the Heavenly Father's,) as also "the Spirit of God was seen descending and remaining on him." John i. 33, 34.

Can now any body persuade himself, that Christ could at the same time contradict himself so, as flatly to deny that they had ever heard the voice of his Father, or seen his *Εἶδος*? Our translation has *his shape*, but to me it seems rather to imply a visible perception, a sight. But the whole remainder of this speech tends to shew, that the true cause of their incredulity was in the Jews
them-

themselves; and to the same purpose are the words in question adapted, if rightly understood. For *to hear a voice*, does in Scripture not only signify to hear the sound of it, but also to assent and hearken to it: John x. 27. Likewise *to see*, does not only signify to have an object incurring into the eyes of the body, but also to mind what one sees, to have a just sense of it: Matth. xiii. 13.

1 John iii. 6. When therefore Christ said, “Ye have never heard his voice, nor seen his shape;” it may very well be understood of their behaviour on such occasions; when they heard the voice of God, or had him in sight, (for instance, the Schecina or glory of the LORD: Numb. xiv. 10. xvi. 19, 42.) that they did not hearken to it, nor mind or consider it, which is the very thing complained of, Psal. xcv. 7. in these words: “To-day, if ye
 “ *will hear his voice*, harden not your heart,
 “ as in the day of provocation, and as in the
 “ day of temptation in the wilderness: when
 “ your fathers tempted me, proved me, and
 “ *saw* my works; forty years long was I
 “ grieved with this generation, and said, It
 “ is a people that do err in their heart, and
 “ they have not known my ways.”

Mr.

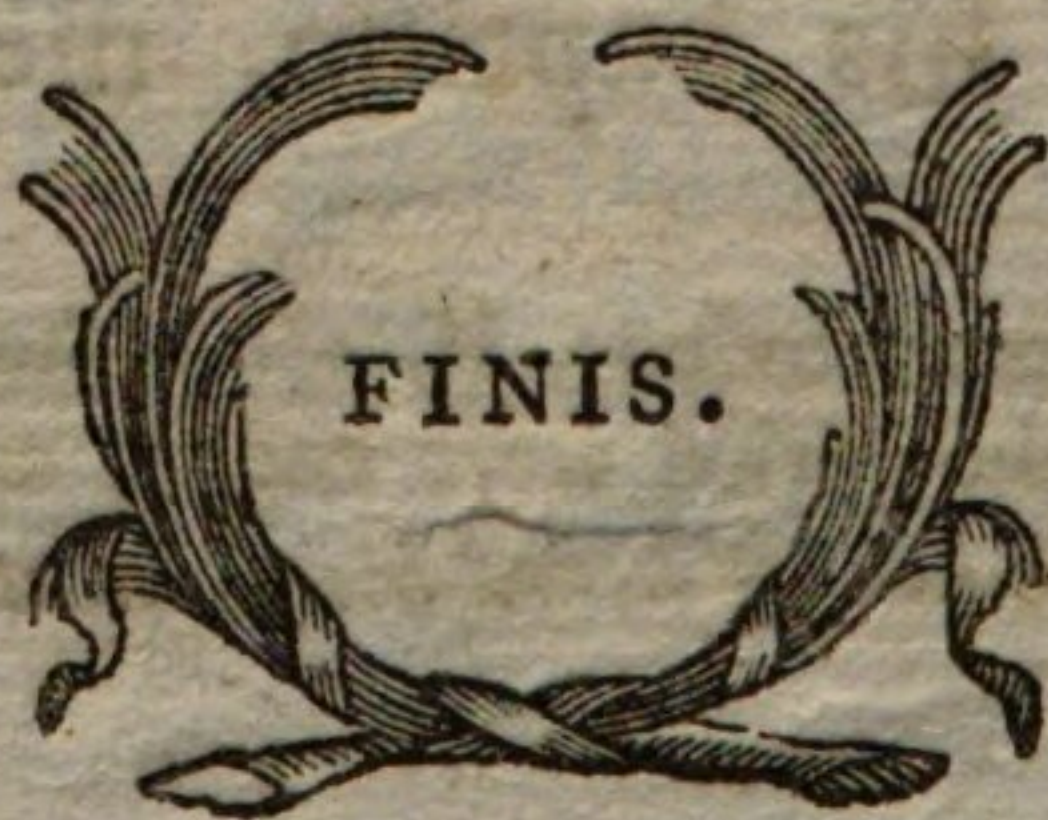
Mr. LEVI indeed pretends, (p. 71.) “ that
 “ at no time whatsoever the nation did deny
 “ the divine mission of Moses ;” but let only
 be read Numb. xiv. xvi. and added Acts vii.
 39, 52, 53. and then judge. This sense aptly
 coheres and fully corresponds with what fol-
 lows: (ver. 38.)* “ And ye have not his
 “ word abiding in you:” (*i. e.* You do not
 abide by it ; meaning the Prophet’s word, 2
 Pet. i. 19. you do not give it room, Heb.
 iv. 2.) “ for whom he hath sent, him ye be-
 “ lieve not;” (as is further explained, ver.
 39.) “ You search the Scriptures, for you
 “ seem (have the appearance) to hold by them
 “ eternal life:” (for this I take to be the right
 sense of this verse) “ They also are testifying
 “ of me ; (ver. 40) yet you will not come to
 “ me, that ye might have life. (ver. 42) I
 “ know you, that you have not the love of
 “ God in you.”

But Christ might also well have said, that
 they had never before heard the voice of his
 Father and seen his sight, as they were heard
 and seen at his baptism, meaning not so

* It would be more obvious, if, after the words “ *hath borne*
“ witness of me,” the period were ended, and a new verse begun
 with these ; *Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, &c.”*

much the sound of the voice, as the thing spoken, (“For, unto whom said he at any time, Thou art my Son.” Heb. i. 5.) joined with the Spirit of God descending in a bodily form (probably of fire) and remaining upon him: Luke iii. 22. John i. 33. Not to mention, that there is great reason to believe, that it was the *Λογος*, *the Word*, by which God formerly also spake to Moses and the people of Israel, not the Father immediately.

Considering all this, where is now the least shadow of reason, “that we must grant either that Moses spake truth,” (recording, that God spake to the Jewish nation face to face) “and the expression of Christ is false; or that Christ spoke truth, and Moses false.” Each of them speaking of quite different things, both spake the truth; and all which Jesus spake at that time, continues unhappily to be applicable to the Jews to this very day.



ERRATA.

- Page 6. l. 1. For *of the being of God itself*, read, of a God.
l. 19. After the word *foretold*, add, *particularly, the light*
of the world. Isa. xlix. 6. lx. 1.
23. l. 25. for *within*, r. together with.
50. l. 7. for ουκων r. συκων.
l. 9. for αυτην r. αυτην.
- Page before Preface, r. Sacrae Coenæ Theoria Sacra.

E R R A T A

- Page 6. l. 1. For of the being of God itself, read, of a God.
l. 19. After the word 'forwards', add, particularly, the light
of the world. l. 22. l. 23. l. 24.
25. l. 25. for 'entire', r. together with.
26. l. 1. for 'entire' r. entire.
l. 2. for 'entire' r. entire.
Page before Preface, r. Same Count Theoria Secret.

Krauter, Philipp David

A new succinct and candid examination of Mr. David Levi's objections
against Jesus Christ, and the gospel

Bath 1788

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